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ABSTRACT

Vocational training strategies have been developed to assist underprivileged populations (middle-aged and elderly people, persons with disabilities, women-headed families, and aborigines) in Taiwan, which makes up about 20 percent of the population. These strategies include the following: enacting laws and regulations, creating projects to subsidize their employment and training, strengthening administrative organizations and promoting training, implementing vocational training, subsidizing local city and county government training efforts, and establishing quotas and supporting plans for hiring persons with disabilities. Problems in training underprivileged persons are as follows: providing child care, learning how to design training programs for middle-aged and elderly adults, finding suitable training for persons with disabilities, and developing job-retention skills for indigenous peoples. Attempts are being made to address these problems and find solutions so that these populations can receive the training they need to become productive and self-supporting citizens of Taiwan. (Contains 23 references.) (KC)

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The Vocational Training Strategy for the Underprivileged Population in Taiwan, R.O.C.

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Abstract

The Underprivileged population in Taiwan includes women independently supporting the family, the middle aged and the elderly, the disabled, aborigines and low-income family. According to the Employment Services Act, the authority should make plans to help the underprivileged who have work ability to be employed. The best way to obtain the vocational competence in a short time is through vocational training. Definitely, it can enhance the function of society and improve the living of the underprivileged if we have better vocational training strategies. It is the responsibility of a welfare country to help the underprivileged to obtain the necessary knowledge and skills.

First, this paper will provide brief introduction of the background and current status of vocational training in Taiwan. Next, the paper will discuss problems and current approaches for facilitating the underprivileged with better employability . Finally, this paper will propose practicable strategies in Taiwan for future improvement.

Keywords vocational training, strategy, special people, Underprivileged , women independently supporting the family, the middle aged and the elderly, disabled, aborigines and low-income family.

I. Introduction

Since July in 1997, the financial crisis that started in Asia has swept through the whole world and done tremendous damages to global economy. The most obvious impact on Taiwan is the change in the supply and demand of the labor market. The underprivileged often, with less competitiveness, fell victims to the crisis. How to implement vocational training to help the underprivileged with the unemployment problem has become a significant issue at present.

The underprivileged, as we define here, include women independently supporting the family, the middle-aged and the elderly, the disabled, aborigines and

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the low-income family. The middle-aged and the elderly mean those aged from 45~64. The disabled include the physically handicapped, mentally retarded, and both physically and mentally disabled. The aborigines include mountain dwellers and plain (urban) aborigines. Women independently supporting the family mean the housewives who return to the labor market again. The low-income families, according to the statistics of Ministry of Interior Affairs in 1996, arise from the death of the living supporter, the large number of members incapable of earning a living the old age, and the internal illness or the disability of family members. Thus, there is an overlap of the disabled and the low-income family.

II. The Underprivileged and The Labor Market

(A) Population of the Underprivileged

The total number of population in Taiwan at the end of 1996 was about 21 million (currently 22 million). Among the underprivileged, the middle-aged and the elderly occupy 3,557,302, the disabled 456,683, the aborigines 381,174 and the low-income family 115,542(Ministry of Interior Affairs, 1997)

Table 1. Numbers of the middle-aged and the elderly in 1996 Unit: persons

Item	Population	% of population
the middle-aged and the elderly	3,557,302	16.57%
The low-income family	115,542	0.54%

Source: MDA. (1997a).

Table 2. Numbers of the disabled in 1996 Unit: persons

Year	Total	Physically disabled	Mentally disabled	Multiple disabled	Others	% of population
1996	456,683	205,713	59,570	49,797	141,603	2.12

Source: MDA. (1997a).

Table 3. Numbers of aborigines in 1996 Unit: persons

Item	Population	% of population
Total	381,174	1.77
Mountain dwellers	178,301	0.82
Plain(Urban)dwellers	202,873	0.95

Source: CLA. (1997a).

(B) The Occupational Structure of The Underprivileged

In 1996, among the total number of laborers (3,557,302), the number of laborers aged from 45 of 64 was 2,165,237, the male occupied 82.44% and the female 39.04%. This fact showed that the number of employed female workers is fewer than half of the male workers.

Since 1993, the population aged over 65 has consisted 7% of the total population in Taiwan, which show that Taiwan is moving toward an aging society. In the future, there will be a greater dependence on the working force of the middle-aged and the elderly. Thus the vocational training and employment of the middle-aged and the elderly will be an important event that deserves the government's concern.

47.13% of the middle-aged and the elderly worked in the service trade; among them, the majority are in business, social and personal services. Second to the service trade is the industry with 30.37%, followed by the agriculture with 22.50%. These statistics indicate the middle-aged and the elderly are mainly in the service trade. Regarding the employment, about 1,120,882 middle-aged and elder people are employed and the employment rate was 52.38%. Concerning the unemployment, the total number of the unemployed people was 240,000 and the rate was 2.6%. Among the total unemployed people, the unemployed middle-aged and elderly were 25,306 people and the unemployment rate was 1.17% (Council of Labor Affairs, 1997)

(C) The Economic Status of the Underprivileged

In terms of income, the average wage of the middle-aged and the elderly in May 1996 was US$1,050, which met the standard income of general citizens. However, the average income of mountain aborigines is 59.13% of general citizens'; that of plain aborigines is 62% of general citizens'; that of urban aborigines is 72.30%. In other words, aborigines in Taiwan are the underprivileged in the respect of income. According to the statistics of Ministry of Interior Affairs, the low-income family depended 59.7% of income on the government's subsidy and only 24.04% on their own wages. It is necessary that the government should implement better welfare approaches like vocational training to improve their living.

III. The General Status of Implementing the Vocational Training for the Underprivileged

(A) Enact laws and regulations for the underprivileged

In "the Vocational Training Act" and "the Employment Service Act," projects meant to subsidize the employment and training of the under- privileged are: "the project of Conducting Vocational Training on the Disabled entrusted by Employment

and Vocational Training Administration, Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan," and "Regulations of Subsidizing Private Business of Employing the Elderly, Aborigines, Disabled and Lay-off Employees." Besides, other relative regulations are as follows:

(1) The subsidy for low-income and disabled trainee in public training institute.
(2) Regulation of promoting vocational training at the local city and county level by Employment and Vocational Training Administration.
(3) Regulation of living financial aids for trainee during the period of training.
(4) Regulation of subsidizing automation technology training for employees and training for the middle-aged and the elderly employees.
(5) Approach of promoting women employability.
(6) Approach of promoting the middle-aged and the elderly employability.
(7) Approach of promoting the employability of aborigines and the elderly.
(8) Approach of promoting the employability of the handicapped and the elderly.
(9) Approach of promoting the employability of the low-income family.
(10) Regulation of financial aids for the less employable trainees in the public or private training providers/schools.

(B) Strengthen administrative organizations and promote training

The highest level of administrative organization supervising vocational training is Executive Yuan; the subordinate authorities concerned in the central government is Employment and Vocational Training Administration, Council of Labor Affairs; in the local level is city /county government. Three types of training implementation institutions are as follows:

(1) 13 public vocational training center run by the government. Their training targets include the following groups. :
   (a) Citizens
   (b) Institutions sponsored by government.
   (c) Training fee paid by the government.
   (d) Providing employment service and guidance.

(2) Institutes affiliated with public enterprises/schools, or legal bodies. For example, Taiwan Power Company Training Center is the example of affiliated institute of public enterprises.

(3) Instituted set up by legal bodies of financial groups.
   One example is the affiliated vocational training center of the Metal Industry Corporation.

(C) Implement Practical Training

The vocational training of the underprivileged is mainly implemented in public training institutes. The period of training depending on actual needs, vary from 2 weeks to 3 years. Currently the training courses can be divided into about 90 types, ie., metal mechanical processing, welding, wiring, electronic engineering, car repairing & maintenance, computer application, garment and textile, etc.. In 1997, approximately 65,431 trainees completed the training. The under-privileged can attend any kind of programs according to their interests and needs. Government also offers job placement for them.

In addition to training in public institutes, the government entrusts schools, academic research institutes and businesses with training for citizens of low-employability. It is also common that enterprises sponsor workshops to train their employees or anyone interested in business management. Table 4 enumerates the numbers of enterprise workshops and trainees.

Table 4. Workshops and trainees in enterprises training

Year / Number / Type	1995	1996	1997	1998
Workshops	10	10	22	24
Trainees	1,000	1,624	2,381	5,910

Source: Statistical Board 1 998 .

(D) Enacting the rules for further subsidizing trainees

The current approaches taken by the government are (1) every trainee can have living allowances of NT$10,000 per month, and (2) the duration of aids may reach 6 months at most. Besides, The financial aids for meal amounts to NT$1,980 per person per month. The special scholarships for the low-income and disabled are NT$10,000 per person in six months long.

Table 5. Numbers of the underprivileged who receive living allowances in vocational

training

Year / Persons Type	1995	1996	1997	1998
Women	13	45	43	4
The middle-aged and the elderly	6	17	8	4
The disabled	942	1,080	1,184	133
Aborigines	542	1,343	1,489	216
The low-income family	-	35	38	3
Total	1503	2,520	2762	360

Source: Statistical Board 1 998 .

Table 6. Numbers of the underprivileged receiving meal allowances of vocational training

Year / Persons Type	1995	1996	1997	1998
Women	11	26	32	11
the middle-aged and the elderly	6	8	6	11
The disabled	478	468	617	471
Aborigines	180	389	608	155
The low-income family	13	26	34	8
Total	688	917	1,297	647

Source: Statistical Board 1 998 .

(E) The Results of Promoting the Vocational Training for the Underprivileged

Table 7. Numbers of the underprivileged completing training from 1995-1998

Year / Persons / Type	1995	1996	1997	1998
Women	7,961	9,462	10,675	7,603
the middle-aged and the elderly	1,090	2,580	3,934	2,496
The disabled	508	1,192	747	804
Aborigines	389	897	2,215	960
The low-income family	45	132	233	124
Total	9,993	4,263	17,804	12007

Source: Statistical Board 1 998 .

(F) Subsidize Local City/County Governments with Training

The central government used "The Employment Settlement Fund" to subsidize training courses held by city/county governments. Any citizens or the underprivileged can freely choose to attend the training courses. Table 8 indicates the status of training.

Table 8.The Result of subsidizing city/county governments to hold vocational training

Year / Persons / Type	1995	1996	1997	1998
Institutions	23	24	24	15
Trainees	6,474	7,428	9,307	816

Source: Statistical Board 1 998 .

(G) Enhancing the Employment Approaches

Currently, there are two approaches for the disabled to hale the job in the world of work, i.e.: (1) quota system of fixed number of hiring the disabled regulated in the "Laws of Welfare for the Disabled". (2) the supporting plans for guiding the disabled in employment. Take the former as an instance, at the end of 1996, totally 7,907 public and private organizations employ 24,940 disabled employees. Take the second for example, at the end of 1996, there were up to 113 welfare service institutes for the disabled. The living financial aids were up to about NT$3 billion dollars. However, these approaches are not fully implemented in the whole society. Government must force every institution to follow these approaches.

IV. Training Problems for the Underprivileged

(A) Female Householder with Children

Family education is the main cradle for the formulation of individual values. Female householders not only have to work for the living of their families, but also must take care of their children who are often neglected in the society. The key issues for consideration now are the establishment of local assistance network, the provision of needed facilities and practical assistance, and the consolidation of civil groundwork for the 21st century.

(B) Demand and Design of Training Programs for the Middle-aged and Elderly

Government incentives have been available to encourage businesses in employing the elderly, redesigning of positions for the middle-aged and the elderly, and enhancing the utilization of the retired workforce; since 1994, a number of incentives programs have been initiated and implemented. Government literature (Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, 1997b), however, indicates that middle-aged and elder workers find it difficult to adapt to technical innovation, acquire new skills of second expertise, and adjust themselves mentally to job transferring or re-employment. Therefore, a critical issue lies in the design of training programs that meet the need of both the employers and employees.

(C) Employment Suitability for the Trained Handicapped

Several measures have been implemented by the government to promote equal job opportunity for the handicapped: individualized and community-based employment services, encouraging businesses to re-design positions for the handicapped, group activities of suitability and growth, seminars for the handicapped and their employers, development of competency evaluation tools to assist the handicapped in the employment process, and bonuses for emlployers of the handicapped (Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, 1997). Focus in the near future should be on the integration of vocational training and competency analysis and evaluation for promoting suitable employment.

(D) Vocational Training for the Indigenous People

In recent years, quite a number of vocational training policies have been adopted to help the indigenous people adapt to the modern society and seek employment. However, some obstacles in vocational training, as outlined in Table 9, remain for better solution:

Table 9: Current Practices and Problems of Vocational Training for the Indigenous People

Strategies	Issues	Employment Difficulties
1. Formulation and implementation of vocational training programs	1. Insufficient attention on vocational training	1. Poor qualitative and quantitative basic education leading to low labor quality
2. Offering training of practical trades	2. The lack of vocational etnics in training efforts	2. The lack of farsighted occupational habits and employment preference
3. Integration of vocational education and training efforts	3. The need to strengthen job counseling afte: training is received	3. Poor cultural adaptability as the key factor of escapism
4. Incentives for the indigenous people to join training programs	4. Insufficient basic competency that affects the outcomes of training	4. Insufficient communication and interaction between the government and the indigenous people

Source: Chi-cheng Chang (1998) and Chi-yue Cheng (1998); revised.

(E) Training and Family Caretaking Problems for Women of Subsidized Households

Married women of subsidized households, when joining labor force, are restrained by age limitation, as well as by improper trades, periods and locations of training that get in the way in their family caretaking responsibility. Furthermore, there is no relevant legislation in "family support" that actually help women of subsidized households to carry out their duty. This dilemma in job and family, as well as the lack of comprehensive supportive measures (Council of Labor Affairs, Executive Yuan, 1997), is the key factor that hampers employment for women of subsidized households.

V. Vocational Training Strategies for the Underprivileged

(A) Government Strategies

Table 10 outlines the government strategies in the provision of vocational training to the underprivileged:

Table 10: Major Vocational Training Strategies for the Underprivileged

Strategies	Description
1. Incentives of supplementary measures	The main purpose of vocational training is to achieve full and suitable employment for the underprivileged. Thus, many supplementary packages are offered to encourage them to join the training programs.
2. Better utilization of local training resources	Abundant local resources are properly utilized in the training process; on-the-job training is also made available to trainees so that their acquired skills can meet local demand.
3. Flexible and diversified training programs	Training programs must be flexible and diversified in accordance with social shifts. This is conducive for meeting the needs of trainees, making more options available to them in determining job preference.
4. Encourage corporate training opportunity	Small and medium enterprises account for more than 90% in Taiwan's industrial structure. Encouraging SMEs to provide training opportunity to the underprivileged is a key area for emphasis.
5. Expand training scope by integrating vocational education	Vocational education has been playing a crucial role in contributing to Taiwan's economic development by providing the necessary workforce. Thus, the scope of vocational training can be broadened when the underprivileged are offered the opportunity to receive existing and new resources in training curriculum, equipment, materials and evaluation.
6. Formulation of supplementary measures to increase training options	The government is planning on the possibility of offering "training voucher" to encourage trainees to receive proper training. Initial trial run is aimed at the physically handicapped (Chen-chang Kuo, 1998), who are issued "training voucher" to receive education or training in government-designated facilities.

(B) Future Strategies--Suggestion

(1) Cooperation with Social Welfare Agencies to Provide Solutions for Female Householder with Children

In order to meet the needs of female householders, the government can provide them with special vocational programs, and encourage businesses to re-design positions exclusively for female householders, such as shared position for two individuals and partial or flexible working hours. In addition, daycare centers for the elderly and children must be set up without delay. Other resources that can be utilized include social welfare agencies or elementary schools. Educational institutions in the community can also play a supportive role in assisting the counseling of children.

(2) Providing the Middle-aged and the Elderly with Proper Training Courses that Meet the Demand of Both the Employers and Employees

Employment issues for the middle-aged and elderly involve the utilization of corporate labor force and the protection of individual life. They should be dealt with from the perspectives of employers and employees. What must be studied first is the job opportunity available to the middle-aged and elderly and the content of the job needed. This can be followed by the research into their job nature. Finally, proper vocational training programs for the middle-aged and elderly are developed in accordance with the supply and demand of labor force.

(3) Integration of Supplementary Measures into the Training Programs for the Mentally and Physically Handicapped

HRD for the handicapped involves three aspects: education and rehabilitation, vocational training and competency evaluation, and job placement and career counseling. These elements are interrelated and should be dealt with collectively. As vocational training and competency evaluation is the key to suitable employment and job placement, more trades for the handicapped should be developed, and qualitative research in particular should be carried out for better competency evaluation.

(4) More Attention on the Vocational Training for the Indigenous People

Certain achievements were made in Taiwan with regard to HRD for the indigenous people in the aspects of vocational training and education (Dan-bai Feng,

1995). Vocational training alone, however, is the best path to develop competency for the indigenous people in the short term; counseling efforts during the training process have great impact on the stability of their future employment. Thus, counseling efforts must be carried out from the perspective of cultural foundation in order to strengthen their social adaptability. At the same time, due to the lack of theoretical science and abstract thinking ability for the indigenous people, the scope and depth of their training should be adjusted accordingly with their learning effectiveness.

(5) Integration of Social Support for the Subsidized Households

Each subsidized household should be filed in a continuous manner in order to provide it with the living skills it needs. Attention must be on the counseling and confidence building so that subsidized households can enter the labor force without difficulties. By doing so, poverty can be alleviated and household income be improved. Community-based social assistance system can also be utilized to benefit the subsidized households.

VI. Conclusions

In the past three centuries, countries that could accumulate wealth were generally those with abundant natural resources or huge capital. In the dramatic shift of wealth in the next century, however, the power paradigm of countries worldwide will be re-organized, with creative thinking, imagination, invention and new technology being the key factors for corporate success in the 21st century (Michio Kaku, 1998). Undoubtedly, knowledge and technology have become the driving force of comparative advantage among countries and businesses. Thus, it is imperative that the underprivileged take a more active attitude in participating in education and training in light of the coming competition of the new era. This proactive approach will equip them with the necessary vocational competency and potentials to develop a brighter career for tomorrow.

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